

DYNAMIC DUO

STACK paid a visit to the Atlanta set of *Ant-Man and the Wasp* to experience the buzz surrounding the latest addition to the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Words Gill Pringle

As Paul Rudd's ex-con Scott Lang balances fatherhood with being a tiny superhero, *Ant-Man and the Wasp* sees him get some healthy competition in the shape of Evangeline Lilly, reprising her role as Hope van Dyne, finally getting her own suit and fulfilling her destiny as The Wasp.

With fans still buzzing over the ending of *Avengers: Infinity War*, Marvel expects to capitalise on that curiosity with this *Ant-Man* sequel, said to reveal clues about *Avengers 4*.

As the scientist behind the shrinking technology, Michael Douglas's Hank Pym begins to wonder whether his wife Janet, the original Wasp portrayed by Michelle Pfeiffer, may have survived, sparking expectation for their daughter Hope, who has now stepped into her mother's wings.

When *STACK* meets with the cast on set in Atlanta, Lilly is less concerned about her shiny new suit and more invested in communicating the emotional beats of her storyline since we last saw her in 2015's *Ant-Man* debut.

"Repairing a broken relationship with your father after 30 years of distance should have a profound effect on a person, and I really want to show that," she says.

Fully embracing her new skills, she's energised from spending her first day on set with Rudd as fully suited and helmeted insects, her hair still tucked into a skullcap.

"I was jumping around like a little bunny

rabbit. I was so excited. I just think it looks so cute and adorable, these two cute matching boy girl superheroes. I am still a six-year-old at heart," she grins.

"There are other flying superheroes so I'm not the first, but I don't believe there's any that shrink *and* fly. I think it gives my character an

as stingy. But hopefully not too girly," she adds.

Training for the role was easy. "I've always stayed in shape – that's just who I am. All my characters are in good shape right from my first role in *Lost* 16 years ago. While I don't think of Hope as a superhero persona, I do think it's important for female superheroes to look strong and not just have beautiful breasts and butts."

If Hank and Hope's relationship is not in a good place when we first meet them again, Lilly describes Hope as "fully freed, fully realised, fully in control of her circumstances and her choices."

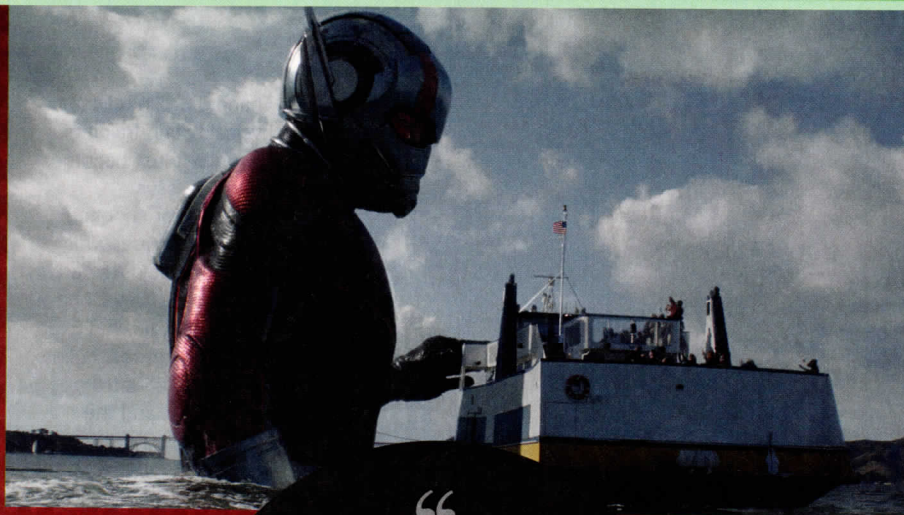
Weirdly enough, the role has made her a wasp magnet. "Since I started shooting this film I've had multiple interactions with wasps. I've always loved insects ever since I was a little kid. I was the caterpillar girl in school. I would get my friends to cover me from head to toe in caterpillars and run around and scare the other girls.

"I've always got angry at people who kill insects. Don't do that! It's a living creature. My own children love insects because I force them to and they have no choice," admits the mother-of-two.

A self-described "control freak," it took a while to get used to Marvel's policy of not sharing storylines with the cast, mixing it all up in the edit bay. "I hate it. Every day I tell myself: Remember when you were in school

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incredible amount of grace. If you're fighting and launching yourself into the air and landing on the ground, you will inevitably have to do a beautiful three-point stance at the end. But Wasp, on the other hand, has the option of supporting herself with her wings, so everything can be lighter and graceful as well



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and you just put out your hands and you'd just fall into your friend's arms? So it's like that, falling into the arms of Marvel.”

Entering the story is Laurence Fishburne as Dr. Bill Foster, a scientist and former colleague of Hank Pym, now working with Hannah John-Kamen's mysterious character, Ghost.

Having dipped his toe into the DC world with *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* two years earlier, he's attracted to the lightheartedness of the Marvel universe. “No matter how much the world is in danger, and cities crumble and all this horrible sh-t happens, they somehow manage to keep it light and fun so that at the end of the day, it's enjoyable.”

Fascinated by the advanced technology which enhances today's films, Fishburne only wishes it existed when he first stepped into *The Matrix* 21 years ago, “I still think *The Matrix* was the first movie that delivered on one comic book's promises.”

When Paul Rudd joins us, resplendent in full Ant-Man attire, he gamely invites us to touch his shiny Ant suit, which feels like leather.

Growing accustomed to his role as the teeniest superhero in the MCU, he laughs, “It's not Winter Soldier and even though it's heroic, at its core I'm just playing a conflicted guy who's not so dissimilar from everyone else; not really born with any kind of super powers.”

Portraying the littlest hero has made a big difference in his life, from the excitement of his own kids to working with a children's hospital in his native Kansas City. “Every year I visit this hospital and talk to the kids but none of them really knew who I was until after *Ant Man*. It's a significant change from being in an R-rated comedy,” laughs Rudd, whose first scenes in

the sequel show him under house arrest.

“In this film, we see how the things that happened in *Civil War* have created a lot of problems. Hope isn't speaking to me and I am not living a very heroic life, spending the last couple of years in my house with Cassie coming over for play dates.”

In common with Lilly, he now feels a kinship with ants. “I would never crush one. I let 'em, do their thing now.”

Returning to the director's seat is Peyton Reed, who intriguingly describes his sequel as a road movie, in the spirit of *Midnight Run* or *After Hours*.

“If the first one was really a heist movie where they have to break in to Pym Tech and figure that out, then this one feels much more like they're on the run,” he teases.

“It's a search and rescue film, but it also feels like an Elmore Leonard crime movie. There are a lot of different characters, not just the ones we know from the first movie, but there are villains and antagonists who are more akin to street level criminals.”

Nodding to his decision to title the film, *Ant-Man and the Wasp*, he adds, “It's definitely her coming out party. To be able to introduce her as a hero in this movie is one of the great joys for me.”

Exploring the gender politics of Scott and Hope's relationship, he says, “It's not just about them coming together as heroes. It's more about: How do they coexist as man and woman?”

→ *Ant-Man and the Wasp* is in cinemas on July 5.

TWO'S COMPANY



BATMAN AND ROBIN

Although they haven't always been best of mates, oftentimes there are situations where Batman would be thwarted without his trusty boy wonder, Robin.



MARIO AND LUIGI

Sometimes it's interesting to think about the fact that by calling them the Mario Bros., it implies that Mario's name is Mario Mario.



HAN SOLO AND CHEWBACCA

Like wookiees and cream, Han and Chewie are nigh inseparable over the whole Star Wars saga — probably because no-one else can understand what Chewie's saying.



CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BUCKY BARNES

In a world of war, you always need someone who'll have your back. They've had their differences of opinion, but they'll always be there for each other.

